INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF 'DHARA AND SHAKTI' IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF VANDANA SHIVA, ANITA NAIR, AND ANITA DESAI

A THESIS

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Introduction

Feminism is a theory that advocates the rights of women. Feminism demands the sexes' political, economic, personal, and social equality. When feminists penetrate themselves with ecology then the word ecofeminism arrives and the ecofeminist theory develops. Feminism is an ideology that believes women should get equal opportunities in education, employment, and in social life. In our traditional view, feminism means women fighting for their rights and demanding equal status in society. The development of the feminist theory leads to the outcome of many sub-branches of feminism like Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist and Socialist Feminism, Cultural Feminism, and Eco-Feminism.

Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that studies environmentalism and which shows the relationship between women and the earth, as foundational to its analysis and practice. Ecofeminist thinkers study the concept of gender to analyze the relationships between humans and the natural world. Women act as curators of nature. Ecofeminism is a word which is coined by French feminist F Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *LeFéminisme ou la Mort* published in 1974. Ecofeminism collaborates with environmentalism and emphasizes the importance of women and nature. There are several sub branches of ecofeminism Like liberal ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, materialist ecofeminism, and vegetarian ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism studies and analyses the correlation between women and nature. Women and nature are interrelated and interconnected with each other. They work parallel to each other. If we oppress and dominate one, it means we are oppressing another. According to one interpretation of ecofeminist theory, Capitalism only favors paternalistic and patriarchal values. This belief implies that the effect of capitalism is that it will not benefit women and has led to a worse effect on women and nature. In the 1970s, early precursors in ecofeminist theory believed that the split between women and nature can only be healed by the feminine instinct for nurture and care and holistic knowledge of nature's processes.

As a widespread belief, we all agree that in ancient times, earth (Prakriti) is worshipped as mother nature and women are represented as Shakti. Both women and nature have the power from which all life arises. According to Vandana Shiva, we all have forgotten that the ‘’Feminine Principle” is associated with women and nature. In India, the Chipko movement of rural women of Gharwal, Uttarakhand is one of the famous

historic movements which is against the destruction of our ecosystem. Led by Ms. Gaura Devi, the women associated with the Chipko movement stood against violence created against nature for the sake of development.

The theory of ecofeminism came from the belief that earth is our mother and without her, life is not possible on this planet. In many cultures, women are named after the names of Goddess, generally associated with Shakti. Women act as the primary caretakers of the family, and all household work is performed by women. So, it's the environment that plays a major role in their life.

Ecofeminism is a theory that has emerged from many fields of feminist inquiry and activism. "Movements all over the world that are dedicated to the continuation of life on earth, like the Chipko movement in India, the Anti-Militarist movement in Europe and the US, the movement against dumping of hazardous wastes in the US, and Green Belt movement in Kenya, are all labelled as "ecofeminist" movements" (Rao 125). It is developed out of ideology that focuses on oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and physical abilities and which functions with the same ideology which oppresses nature. It is an urgent need to replace the patriarchal system with feminine values.

Eco-critics take nature as a dominant factor because human beings are largely dependent for their livelihood on nature and the environment. All life forms whether living or non-living arises from nature. In a broader sense, all life forms are totally dependent on nature.

Ecocriticism is a term which was originated in the 1990s and was later flourished by William Rueckert in his book *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. This study shows the relationship of man with mother earth. It focuses on how man is destroying nature for his own profit. On the contrary, ecofeminism focuses on an ethic of care, where everyone is equal and the decisions should be made by counting everyone, living or non-living, and should be equitable. Ecofeminist advocates rejoicing in the patriarchalmasculine system of dominance and exploitation by the system, where everyone cares forothers and understands their needs and problems. Patriarchy is the root cause of all ecological crises because men always control women and nature, the result of which is overpopulation and overexploitation.

The significance of the study of ecofeminism is that women have all, first-hand knowledge of nature and home. On the other, we regard them as only victims of violence

and exploitation. But we forget that they have traditional knowledge of nature, forests, and our ecological system. As they are directly engaged with nature, they become the forebearer in solving the problem of ecological crisis and its adverse effect on women.

Literature Review

A brief view of the existing literature provides significant insights and approaches to understanding the concept of Ecofeminism. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to take a look at the available literature on the research problem. Plenty of literature is available on the concept of ecofeminism, some of the major works have been reviewed as under:

Manisha Rao in her review paper "Ecofeminism at the Crossroads in India: A Review" which was published in DEP Journal, writes about the issues of environment and ecology. Struggle in which women participated but were not given due importance. She has dwelled in deep on special relationships which women share with the environment. She has highlighted various protest movements which are associated with the foregoing concept, especially in India. She has suggested that Indian environmental sustainability and related movements would gain benefits by including women in them. Therefore, we should include the feminist perspective to make it a broader base (Rao 124-125).

Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* focuses on the role of women in stopping environmental destruction through their knowledge and vision. This book shows problems faced by rural women of the global south due to ecological destruction. This book says we are focusing on scientific development but we are forgetting the violence we are creating towards nature and women (Shiva).

Susan Griffin's book Woman *and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* published in 1978 is one of the prose poems which becomes the inspiration for the ecofeminism movement. This book focuses on the identification of women in this male-centered society. Writers talk about the inseparable relationship between women and nature. She has opined that women are more connected to this earth than men. In this work, Griffin has exposed the hypocritical ideology of the western industrial world according to which they consider women submissive due to their closeness with nature yielding to man's dominance over both women and nature (Griffin).

Val Plumwood's book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* published in 1993, says that Feminist theory has a great contribution to political ecology and environmental

philosophy. This book tells the relationship between ecofeminism and ecological feminism. Val Plumwood focuses on the relationship between women and nature and tells how the domination of men over women and nature affects the lives of both (Plumwood).

Bijaylaxmi Mohapatra and Dr. Itishri Sarangi's research paper "Insight of Ecofeminism in the Post-Colonial Era of India, a Special Reference to Kamala Markandaya's Novel Nectar in a Sieve" focuses on the realization of women about the devaluation and exploitation of their lives and also the devaluation of nature in the novel Kamla Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*. This paper shows the attachment of women characters to their land and farming. It also shows the consequences of industrial outbreaks on their lives (Mohapatra and Sarangi 9268-9270).

Nola Nila in her research paper "An Ecofeminist Reading of Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain" shows the ecological concerns depicted in the novel of Anita Desai. The main aim of this paper is to highlight the exploitation experienced by women and nature by the patriarchal society. Female psychology is also understood by her novel *Fire on the Mountain*, which portrays that characters are more attached to nature, where they find solace (Nila 22-23).

Dr. Sarita Pandey in her research paper "Reifying Feminine Principles of River: An Ecofeminist Reading of Geeta Mehta's A River Sutra" explores the reconceptualization of the feminine principles of the Narmada River in the context of Indian religion, tradition, culture, spirituality, and society. This article explores the creative and interesting flow of storytelling that evokes the consciousness of the environment against all unjust political actions (Pandey 279-282).

Youngsuk Chae in his research paper "Postcolonial Ecofeminism in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" shows Arundhati Roy's ecofeminist perspective in her novel. Roy focuses on the confluence of post-colonialism with ecofeminism and the outcome of this will be postcolonial ecofeminism. Roy's main aim is to criticize development which exploits women and nature (Chae 519–522).

Laila Fariha Zein and A. R. Setiawani in their research paper "General Overview of Ecofeminism" studies the general overview of ecofeminism. It elaborates on its history, origin, functions, all types, aims, and the connection it promotes between women and nature. This paper's whole focus is on ecofeminism and the interconnectedness of women and nature (Zein and Setiawani 1-3).

Karen Warren's book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters*, focuses on the powerful relationship of women with nature and the environment. This book talks about nature as a feminist issue. Third-world development and destruction caused due to scientific development women are the worst sufferers. The health of women and children is adversely affected by environmental destruction. It is noted that women spend a lot of their time in farming and with nature. Women should be given due weightage for their productive work. This book also talks about spiritual ecofeminism, in which women are given the highest place because they are responsible for nurture and care, birth and rebirth, and thus will be divine who is worshipped (Warren).

Colleen Mack-Canty in his research paper "Third-Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality" talks about the dualism of nature and culture. This leads to male dominance which results in the oppression and exploitation of nature and women. Here the author talks about the Third wave of feminism which talks about ecocriticism and ecofeminism. If we include nature with feminism, it will have brighter results in our lives and society (Canty 154-155).

Nina Rao in her research paper "Indian Women in a Changing Industrial Scenario" discusses the role of women in changing the Industrial world. Women are efficient in working inside and outside the home. In this review, the focus is on the women working in MNCs. It tells about the manufacturing employment of women labor and its impact on their empowerment and status. Rao's works take four samples of different regions, where women's role as laborers had been explored to know the status of womenin these local firms that produce for export (Rao 115-117).

Bina Agarwal in her research paper "The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India" sees a close connection between women and ecology. Women have a strong connection with society and the environment. Women have special knowledge that how to preserve natural surroundings for sustainable development because women play a crucial role at home and outside the home with nature. We humans today are fighting against serious food security threats to our lives because of that women are unable to nurture their families. So, we should promote gender equality and social justice so that women's voices can be heard and they can contribute towards community development and the conservation of natural resources (Agarwal 119-125).

Rekha Pande in her research paper "Eco-Feminism: Making Connections between Feminism and Ecology" writes that she wants a society that is egalitarian and non-hierarchical, ecofeminists demand harmonious relations between man and nature. Women are working as the link between the environment and sustainable development. Conservation of forests and nature is necessary otherwise threats to food security will develop faster. This paper shows the close relationship between women and ecology (Pande 426-427).

M. Joanna Mellor in her research paper "New Woman, New Earth—Setting the Agenda" discusses many key issues that will be for future ecofeminists. Here writer talks about the degradation of nature and the subordination of women and established that both are linked together. To prove his point, Mellor has analyzed women's history, studied sexismthat is prevailing in Christian theology, done psychoanalysis, and also analyzed the socio-economic status of industrial society. Mellor has reinforced about hierarchical dualism that is prevalent in Western culture that separates women and nature from masculine culture. This study works towards finding motivation for the support of women and nature (Mellor 296-300).

Johanna Oksala in his research paper "Feminism, Capitalism, and Ecology" connects feminism, ecology, and Capitalism. This article studies socialist eco-feminism, materialist ecofeminism, and Marxist ecofeminism. This paper outlines the connection between capitalism, the subordination of women, and the exploitation of nature. In particular, the study goes to count two developments that are the dominance of neoliberalism and biotechnology development. This paper studies the theoretical grounds on which both feminism and ecology struggle against capitalism (Oksala 216-219).

Keyoor Pathak and Chittaranjan Subudhi in their review paper "Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development by Vandana Shiva" write about the book of Vandana Shiva which has contributed to ecofeminists, academicians and policymakers to a great extent. In this book, Vandana Shiva criticizes the modern development model which is totally against women, humans and earth. Modernization leads to new dominance which results in hunger and poverty. New scientific development results in the destruction of natural resources like forests, water, and natural surroundings, which ultimately affects the lives of women who are closely connected to nature. Shiva criticizes the methodologies and philosophies of the father of modern science, Francis Bacon which is totally based on the de-mothering of nature (Pathak and Subudhi 426-427).

Indu Swami in her research paper “Woman and Nature: Is There a Special Relationship? Analyzing the Women=Nature Equation” presents that Nature and literature share a close relationship with each other. This paper analyses the connection between women and nature. In her paper, she talked about the oppression of women and nature which is interconnected and has emphasized that a feminist perspective must be included in any ecological solution. Without including women and nature in the development model we cannot attain sustainable development. Swami has raised the issue of including ecofeminism and ecocriticism in the development model so to overcome the concept of dualism and hierarchy (Swami 224-230).

Vandana Shiva and Jayanta Bandyopadhyay in their research paper "The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko Movement" talks about the importance of Chipko movement in which women embraced trees to protect forests from cutting for commercial use. This movement was started by women and they solely worked towards sustainable development and maintaining livelihood. After that, it spreads all over India and then worldwide. It gives an ecological worldview to all human societies, that are threatened by environmental disasters (Shiva and Bandyopadhyay 133-142).

Gourish Mondal and Palash Majumder’s research paper “Ecofeminism: Encouraging Interconnectedness with Our Environment in Modern Society” focuses on the vital connection between women and nature and also on the oppression of nature and women. All ecofeminists and persons working on environmental protection must include a feminist perspective in ecological theory. This paper says that we should have a more interdependent worldview. All living and non-living are necessary for ecological balance. The main aim of ecofeminist theory is to change the mindset of a male-dominated society (Mondal and Majumder 482-484).

Sunder Lal Bahuguna in his book *Women’s Non-Violent Power in the Chipko Movement* wrote about the Women’s Chipko movement which is against tree felling. This is people’s ecological movement to protect the natural environment. In this movement, women adopted the Gandhian path of Non-violence to protect the forest which is their parental home. Here, the writer talks about the blind planning of higher authorities for the sake of development. Which leads to the destruction of natural soil, water, forests, fuel, fodder, etc. (Bahuguna).

Greta Gaard in her book *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* takes into account all the works and theories of all environmentalists, writers and activists. The primary aim of this book is to build a bridge between all activist, workers and academics who are working in the field of environmentalism, animal liberation, and feminism. Ecofeminism's main aim is diversity rather than dualism.This book focuses on combining all who are working in the international radical ecology movement which is for a sustainable way of life for all living and non-living things on this earth. This book draws a challenge to patriarchal essentialism. It focuses on the self-realization that if we harm nature, we ultimately harm ourselves. Then, automatically rational man will change his ways (Gaard).

Francoise d'Eaubonne's book *Feminism or Death: How the Women's Movement Can Save the Planet* mentions the status of women around the world. Here writer says that the matter is not about the equality of women around the world but it's about the life and death of humans and the planet. She criticizes the world where the patriarchal system prevails and focuses on the mutation of both feminism and environmentalism. She wants a world that is free from any essentialism, dualism, any prejudices (Eaubonne).

Danielle Roth-Johnson's research paper "Back to the Future: Françoise d"Eaubonne, Ecofeminism, and Ecological Crisis" focuses on the writing of Francoise d' Eaubonne's feminism and death as depicted in the book *Ecology-Feminism: Revolution or Mutation* which was published in 1978. In this paper, the writer focuses on the relevance of works in the ecofeminist circle and how these works are useful for contemporary feminist scholars. This paper brings an answer to critiques that questions the appropriateness of these texts in current ecological concerns (Johnson 51-53).

W. Fernandes and G. S. Menon's book *Tribal Women, and forest economy. Deforestation, exploitation, and status change* analyze the important role played by women as forest dwellers in maintaining the economy of India. As a well-known fact, women spend more time in the conservation of forests in comparison to men. The book clearly discusses the adverse effect of deforestation on women who are directly involved in the development of the forest economy. This book discusses the decline in the status of women, negligence in tribal families, and changes in policy and attitudes. The government before making any policy should realize the fact that since eternity women alone are responsible for maintaining a balance between humans and nature (Fernandes and Menon).

Cecile Jackson in his article "Women/Nature or Gender/History? A Critique of Ecofeminist Development" emphasizes the link between women and the environment. This work talksabout two main strands of development that are eco-centric and techno-centric. This article talks about romanticism which values nature over culture. Thus, ecofeminism would seem to derive from the eco-centric strand of Western environmentalism (Jackson 389-392).

Ynestra King in his research paper "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology" focuses on the need for a connection between women's feminism and ecology. Ynestra King discusses the beginning of a new theory of ecological feminism that is ecofeminism. This paper demands the liberation of nature and women from all subjugation and exploitation in a male-centric world. This paper concerns the connection between misogyny and the exploitation of nature. Ecofeminists' analysis of militarism has also been discussed which threatens our life through modern technologies. All human and non-human things in this world are interconnected, everything is dependent on each other (King 18-21).

Greta Gaard's research paper "Ecofeminism and Climate Change" argues that the problem of climate change will not be solved by techno-science approaches. In various conferences held in the Western world, women play the role of valuable participants in conservation policy-making. Women are more concerned about climate change than men. Women are more active in climate reform acts. Women show more willingness to work in climate-friendly lifestyles (Gaard 20-33).

Abdul Awal's research paper "The Works of Rabindranath Tagore: An Ecocritical Reading" illustrates the ecocritical analysis as well as studies of the physical environment and literature. The study shows the ill effects of modern technology on the environment and humans. This study illustrates the eco-consciousness of Tagore which is evident through his writings and paintings. Here, the revolt against the exploitation of nature and ecologyis depicted through different eco-philosophies (Awal 1031-1033).

Sangita Patil Sharnappa's research paper "Reconstructing Ecofeminism: A study of Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve" highlights the concept of ecofeminism originated in the West as reflected in the works of Kamla Markandeya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve* published in 1954. This paper closely studies Indian English novels which help in understanding the overview of examining perspectives of Western and Indian ecofeminists (Sharnappa 1-5).

Douglas A. Vakoch and Nicole Anae's book *Indian Feminist Ecocriticism, Ecocritical Theory and Practice* explores all ecofeminist literature across India. This book represents all post-colonial women's writing in Hindi literature. This book depicts various ecofeminist perspectives prevalent in northeast India. This text represents Bodo Literature, folk tales and songs from all directions of India. This text in single writing explores the intersectionality, queerness, and surveillance of all major ecofeminists and eco-critics byreferring to their writings (Vakoch and Anae).

Dr. R. Janatha Kumari in her research paper "Women and Nature: An Ecofeminist Study on the Select Novels of Sheri S. Tepper" discusses that ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study. Sheri S. Tepper, in her writings, presented a new outlook on science fiction to prove that science is also related to nature. Her novels deal with the problem of overpopulation which distracts the path of sustainable development and also presents environmental themes. This paper analyses that the denial of women's role in society and development will have an adverse effect, resulting in a population explosion and creating an imbalance in our ecosystem (Kumari 133-135).

Dr. Ratna Rao in her research paper "A Study of Ecofeminism in the novel Mistress of Spices" studies ecofeminism in the novel *Mistress of Spices* which was written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. She uses different elements of nature like fire and water. The uses of spices presented in the novel are used to cure and heal the Asian community in Oakland. Here in her work nature becomes the most important part and it is presented in the complete cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction (Rao 46-49).

Douglas A. Vakoch, and Sam Mickey's book *Literature and Ecofeminism: Intersectional and International Voices* presents both ecofeminism and ecocriticism theories of literature. This book presents the intersections of sexuality, gender, and the natural world that are mentioned in literary works from Shakespeare to contemporary literature. This book brings together essays from contributors from all over the world like American literature, Spanish, South African, Taiwanese, and of course Indian Literature (Vakoch and Mickey).

Research Gap Identification

The main aim of the study is to discover the unexplored ecofeminist approaches in the novels of Vandana Shiva, Anita Nair, and Anita Desai. Although the works of Anita Nair and Anita Desai are deeply studied separately from ecocritical and feministic viewpoints, these writers and their selected works are not studied form combining ecocritical and

feministic perspectives together as suggested by Vandana Shiva in her concept of ecofeminism. The present research, thus, will bridge the gap between ecocriticism and feminism by bringing into the limelight the social, cultural, and natural factors that influence women to be empowered ultimately generating a strong sense to protect/sustain Nature (Dhara) for the generations to come.

Objectives

The objectives of the current study will include:

1. To examine and emphasize the ways through which both women and nature are treated by patriarchal norms of society.
2. To prove/establish a strong association between women and the environment.
3. To justify the interconnectedness of humans, culture, and the Environment as an inseparable entity.
4. To establish the critical notion that women have a more intimate relationship with nature because of their gender roles.
5. To emphasize the subjugation of nature and the physical environment just as women in the male-centric society.
6. To examine the spiritual practices existing in a society emerging from the close association of women with nature.

Proposed Methodology

The present work is dependent upon primary sources as well as secondary sources. The Primary sources include original works of Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Anita Nairs's *The Better Man and Mistress,* and Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain.* The study of these works does not require any kind of fieldwork, as in-depth textual analysis of the selected works of these novelists will be done in a descriptive, analytical, and comparative way. These works will be critically examined on the basis of their themes, symbols, intrinsic relationship between women and nature/physical environment, related subjugation, and exploitation of both by this male-centric society.

The present novels of these writers will be scrutinized deeply to explore all aspects of ecofeminism. The research work will try to unfold all the thoughts, emotions, and prominent ecofeminist approaches that are applicable in the novels with regard to women and nature. The research will include all basic concepts like ecofeminism, the relationship

between women and nature, patriarchal dominance of women and nature, dualism, etc. by doing analytical and comparative studies of the selected works of Vandana Shiva, Anita Nair, and Anita Desai.

The study will also consider the research material that exists in both print and electronic media. The texts, articles, and books of the writers will be considered in thesis writing with proper citation by adhering to the guidelines prescribed in MLA Handbook 9th edition.

The following works of Vandana Shiva, Anita Nair, and Anita Desai are selected for the present research endeavor:

- Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development (1989)
- The Better Man (2000)
- Mistress (2005)
- Fire on the Mountain (1977)

Thesis Outline:

The research will complete in Five Chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Progression of Ecofeminism

1.2 Major Notions in Ecofeminism

1.3 Branches of Ecofeminism

1.3.1 Vegetarian Ecofeminism

1.3.2 Spiritual Ecofeminism

1.3.3 Material Ecofeminism

1.3.4 Liberal Ecofeminism

1.4 Relation between Radical Ecofeminism, and Cultural Ecofeminism

1.5 Ecofeminism, Gender Studies, and Green Studies

1.6 Hypothesis

1.7 A Brief Sketch of Vandana Shiva

1.8 A Brief Sketch of Anita Nair

1.9 A Brief Sketch of Anita Desai

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Ecofeministic Study of Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*

2.2 Ecofeministic Study of Anita Nair's *The Better Man*

Chapter 3: Materials and Methods

3.1 Ecofeministic Study of Anita Nair's *Mistress*

3.2 Ecofeministic Study of Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*

Chapter 4: Result and Discussion

4.1 Depiction of Women's Dilemma as presented by the selected writers

4.2 Peculiar description of the relationship of women with their physical environment

4.3 Comparison of writing styles, treatment of ecofeministic theory by selected writers

4.4 Comparison of cultural and spiritual notions as depicted in the selected novels

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

5.2 Suggestions for Further Study

Chapter 6: References

The MLA 9th edition Handbook of Research Methodology will be followed for citations and references.

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CERTIFICATE
(SYNOPSIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE)

This is to certify that the Synopsis/Revised Synopsis for Ph.D. Thesis titled, **"Interconnectedness of 'Dhara and Shakti' in the selected novels of Vandana Shiva, Anita Nair, and Anita Desai"**, submitted by **Ms. Punam Devi** to the Career Point University, Hamirpur (H.P.), India in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** in the Division of Language, Journalism, and social sciences, School of Management and Liberal Arts has been approved by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) after an Oral Examination of the student on dated 17th June 2023.

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